

MEMORANDUM

TO: Planning Commission

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MEMO DATE: December 30, 2015

PUBLIC HEARING: January 6, 2016

SUBJECT: Potential Revisions to the Public Hearing Draft of the Updated Housing Chapter
(CPA 2015-0003)

Purpose of this Supplemental Memo

At its December 16, 2015 meeting, the Planning Commission continued the public hearing for CPA 2015-0003 and CPA 2015-0004 until January 6, 2016. These legislative amendments would repeal the existing Introduction and Housing Element in Volume 1 of the Comprehensive Plan and replace them with updated versions, and add the 2015 Housing Strategies Report to Volume 2 of the Comprehensive Plan.

The packet for the public hearing was distributed to commissioners on December 9. Since that time, staff has held discussions with two commissioners on potential changes to the Housing Element (Exhibit 2). This memo serves to summarize those potential changes so that the Planning Commission can consider them in any motion that is made on the proposed legislative amendments to the Comprehensive Plan. In addition, any additional proposed changes to the public hearing drafts of the Introduction and Housing Element will need to be included in the motion.

Since the packet was distributed on December 9, staff has also received two comment letters on the proposal. The first is from Gary Cook, which was distributed to commissioners at the beginning of the December 16 meeting and is also attached (Exhibit 5). The second is from Sheila Greenlaw-Fink, Executive Director of the Community Housing Fund (Exhibit 6). Both letters are focused on the proposed amendments to the Housing Element.

Potential Revisions

1) Emphasizing the connection between Comprehensive Plan Policies and the Major Themes

The updated Introduction (Exhibit 1) outlines four major themes - livability, equity, sustainability, and resiliency – that were established to guide updates to the Comprehensive Plan. Page 2 of the Housing Element states that as the city plans for its future housing needs, it does so with an increased emphasis on these four major themes, and that the chapter's policies are "intended to help Beaverton meet its housing needs in a manner that illustrates the city's commitment to" the four themes.

In addition to the language on page 2, the four major themes are referenced within the narrative that immediately precedes the goals and policies in two of the five chapter sections. The last sentence before Goal 4.2.1 (Housing Type) states that the policies that follow the goal "are intended to meet

the diverse housing needs of Beaverton's current and future residents in a manner that is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan's major themes". Similarly, the last sentence before Goal 4.4.1 (Fair and Affordable Housing) notes that the underlying policies are "further intended to expand the city's future affordable housing supply in a manner consistent with the major themes of the Comprehensive Plan".

Concerns have been expressed that the policies do not have an explicit connection with the four major themes, and that there should be more definitive language that emphasizes the importance of the policies when determining whether land use applications meet development code criteria that require them to be consistent with Comprehensive Plan policies. In lieu of placing repetitive language at the end of every policy explicitly referencing the four major themes, staff proposes adding language about the importance of the four major themes immediately prior to Goals 4.1.1, 4.3.1, and 4.5.1, similar to the language that currently precedes Goals 4.2.1 and 4.4.1. This language will further highlight the role of the major themes in Comprehensive Plan policy development explaining that the themes are embedded in the policies that need to be considered when evaluating land use proposals for consistency with Comprehensive Plan policies.

2) Alternative language for Policy 4.5.1.e

Policy 4.5.1.e is found within Section 4.5: Livability and Neighborhood Character. The language of the policy has been revised several times in recent drafts based on comments from the City Council and Planning Commission, with the current iteration reading as follows:

"Address the potential impacts of densification, including increased traffic and noise, on established neighborhoods".

Staff has some concern about the current wording of this policy as it relates to reviewing land use proposals and development applications that are required to be evaluated for consistency with Comprehensive Plan policies, especially for residential infill development. In many cases, oversized or underutilized properties can see increased density and intensified uses that are permitted under existing zoning. For example, a single family house on a one acre parcel that is zoned R-7 could be subdivided to allow for five additional lots under the existing zoning. Given the city's lack of vacant residential land, especially for single family residential development, infill development will be integral in helping to meet future housing demand. Staff is concerned that the current wording of this policy could be used to discourage or challenge infill development where it is outright permitted by existing zoning.

Staff recognizes the importance of considering neighborhood character and compatibility when evaluating development applications, and the potential impacts that increased density can have on conditions such as traffic and noise. In the current draft of the Housing Implementation Plan (HIP; Exhibit 4), Program 25 calls for the city to "Develop an infill strategy to encourage residential development to be compatible with existing neighborhoods". Currently listed as a mid-term priority in the HIP, staff proposes advancing this program to a near-term priority. In addition, existing development regulations require that projects estimated to exceed certain thresholds of new trips provide mitigation to address traffic impacts associated with development. It is staff's opinion that the HIP and the Development Code are more appropriate places than the Comprehensive Plan to have language that attempts to regulate infill development.

As a compromise, the following change to Policy 4.5.1.e is proposed (new language is underlined), which states that the potential impacts of densification should be addressed when considering comprehensive plan and zoning map amendment applications:

"When considering comprehensive plan and zoning map amendments, address the potential impacts of densification, including increased traffic and noise, on established neighborhoods."

The proposed revision to Policy 4.5.1.e ensures that livability and neighborhood compatibility are considered when reviewing a comprehensive plan map amendment or zone change that would allow increased density, while not discouraging infill development allowed by existing zoning.

Planning Commission Options

The Planning Commission can consider these and any other desired revisions in its motion for the proposed legislative amendments to Volume 1 of the Comprehensive Plan.